Skillful Leader Book Study
Strengthening Teacher Evaluation: Taking Action to Improve Ineffective Instruction **(2014)**

Introduction

Purpose of the Study
- Build conviction and competence for taking on ineffective performance through escalated intervention.
- Develop an accountable learning community for district evaluators.
- Serve as preparation for or follow-up from Skillful Leader III training.

Format
Six or seven sessions of about 60 minutes each. All sessions contain three components:
1. **Start-up:** Connects to previous session and asks participants to report on action taken.
2. **Session Content:** Discussion and application of the reading and reflection on action to be taken.
3. **Commitment for Prep:** Reading and fieldwork to be prepared for the next session.

Estimated times for each component are given in parentheses.
Group size assumed to be 25. Shorten whole group activities

Preparation for Session 1 (to be assigned at least one week in advance)
- Read and highlight key passages and sections of the following chapters: Chapter 1: Introduction and Chapters 4A, 5A, 6A, and 7A.
- Examine the "Quick Start Guide" (back of front cover) and use the guide to dig a little deeper into one or two items of interest.

Session 1: Overview (60 minutes total)

Start-up (10 minutes)
   Quick whip around: Report out: Where did you dive into the book and what did you learn?

Session Content (45 minutes)
   Directions
   Your assignment was to read and highlight chapters that gave you an overview of the book. Take a few minutes to review some of your highlighted passages and identify 2-3 sections that …
   - Were especially interesting
   - Piqued your curiosity
   - Contrasted with how you have been doing things
   You will be using a reading protocol, Save the Last Word for Me (www.nsrfharmony.org/system/files/protocols/doc/save_last_word_0.pdf).

Read the directions below and model them with one table group to demonstrate the process:

> **Count off A-B-C-D-E etc.**
>
> **Person A reads one passage that s/he found significant <u>but does not say anything more.</u>**
>
> > B comments on the passage A read.
> > C comments on the passage A read.
> > D comments on the passage A read, etc. until everyone but A has spoken about the passage.
> >
> > A makes final comments on the passage and what others have said, i.e., has the last word.
>
> **B reads a passage but says nothing more.**
>
> > C, D, etc. comment on the passage B chose until everyone but B has spoken.
> > B has the last word.
>
> Process continues until everyone has read and discussed a passage. You should have time for two rounds.

Implement protocol (20 minutes)

Conduct full-group discussion (15 minutes)
• How does Figure 5A.2, Diagnosing Where to Invest Effort, help you allocate your supervisory time?
• Describe how you gather data and diagnose *patterns* of practice?
• What sections/passages confirm your current practice?
• What sections/passages challenge your current practice?

Reflection and next steps (10 minutes)
What are the implications and commitments for your future learning?

Commitment for Prep (5 minutes)

> **Assignment to prepare for Session 2**
> Read Chapter 6B, Communicating Early Worries, pp. 108-113. Think of an individual who "calls out for you" to communicate an early worry and be prepared to describe the case.
>
> Alternately, describe a recent instance where you used a "worry" type communication even prior to the reading. Be ready to report on exactly what you said, the response, and how it compared with the recommended criteria and examples cited in the reading.

Session 2: Taking Action by Describing and Communicating Worries (60 minutes total)

Start-up (20 minutes)
In trios or quads
• Describe the candidate(s) who could benefit from the communication of an "early worry" (or a previous recipient of an early worry).
• Describe the area of deficit and the data that you will use (or did use).

- Discuss what additional data would be helpful (or might have been helpful) to collect to better ground the worry in evidence.

Session Content (35 minutes)

Application
- Each participant uses the examples in Chapter 6B and criteria listed in Figure 6B.3, How to Communicate Early Worries, to draft a sample worry for one of his/her cases.
- Participants exchange sample worries and provide one another with specific feedback based on the criteria in Figure 6B.3.

Reflection and next steps
What did you learn about using the communication of early worries as an action to make teachers aware of potential issues? What questions do you have? Where will you go next?

Commitment for Prep (5 minutes)

> **Assignment to prepare for Session 3**
> Read Chapter 6C, Communicating Concerns, pp. 114-121.
>
> *Focus Questions*
> - Why is the concern level of response a good match for teachers not on formal evaluation?
> - Which, if any, of the five examples listed on p.115 resemble individuals you have supervised?
> - Why is it important to put concerns in writing?
> - Under what conditions might you not put a concern in writing?
>
> **Fieldwork:** Communicating worries
> Choose a case. Collect data as necessary, plan, and then communicate an early worry. Be prepared to report on exactly what you said and the response and what might come next.

Session 3: Taking Action by Describing and Communicating Concerns
(60 minutes total)

Start-up (15 minutes)
Table groups: Participants report on action implemented since the last meeting. Discuss...
- What you tried regarding communicating a worry supported by data and how it went
- What you plan to do next

Session Content (30 minutes)

Discussion with full group (20 minutes)
- What are the conditions that call for communicating a concern rather than a worry?
- Have you ever written a memo that would be categorized as an instructional concern? What were the circumstances? (*Note:* Do not cite progressive discipline memos. See Chapter 9, p. 217.)
- How will you or did you know when you need to escalate to a full problem description?
- What agreements should you make as a team regarding writing people up, especially for individuals who are off evaluation cycle?

Reflection and application (10 minutes)

Each person identifies a prospective candidate for receiving a written concern. Participants identify what additional data should be examined and design a plan to collect and analyze the data. *(Note:* There is no expectation that the message will be communicated, but participants may be ready to do so.)

Commitment for Prep (5 minutes)

> **Assignment to prepare for Session 4**
> Review Chapter 4A, Expanding the Sources of Data We Use to Evaluate, pp. 33-36. Chapters 4B, 4C, and 4D, skim pp. 37-65.
>
> > *Focus Questions*
> > • Which sources of data might you add or more frequently employ in your data gathering and why? (Use data sources listed in Figure 4A.2, pp. 34-35.)
> > • Do any of the Sample Indicators of Ineffective Practice on p. 39 remind you of someone you know?
>
> **Fieldwork:** Gathering data to craft concerns
> Implement data collection plan for identified "concern" candidates.

Session 4: Planning for Communication of Concern and Using Multiple Sources of Data (60 minutes total)

Note: Depending on the number of participants who have identified concerns, you may well spend additional time helping those members draft a concern statement. In this case, the content described below would be postponed for a later session.

Start-up (15 minutes)
• What source of data are you thinking of adding to your repertoire and why?
• Which group of ineffective indicators reminded you of a teacher you are currently working with or have been concerned about in the past?
• In trios, exchange data collected on identified candidate to receive a concern.

Session Content (35 minutes)

Activity: Focusing on learning (impact) vs. teaching
• Look at the Figure 2.1, p. 13.. This chart summarizes the differences in evaluator actions and stances that occur as we make the shift from being teaching-focused to learning-focused.
• Take 5-6 minutes to review the chart either alone or with one other colleague from your district. Consider only one category at a time, for example the emphasis within your conversations and documents or the characteristic activities. Read across the two columns for that category and make a check or tick mark next to the behaviors that most closely capture what are currently standard practices in your work setting.
• As a group, review and compare the trends you found. Which column has the most marks?

Full- group discussion
• Where is your school/district on making the shift to learning-focused evaluation?
• When you are currently carrying out formal observations, what sources of data do you collect?
• What sources of data are consistent with learning-focused evaluation?

Reflection and next steps
What agreements regarding data collection should you make as a team? What are your next steps? Record and distribute agreements.

Commitment for Prep (10 minutes)

> **Assignment to prepare for Session 5**
> Read pp. 122-125 in Chapter 6D, Developing Formal Problem Description.
>
> *Focus Questions*
> * Why do the authors recommend that problems be clearly described prior to making recommendations?
> * Identify how the concepts of balanced analysis are integrated into the annotated Example 6D.1.
> * Identify two cases from p. 125 that resemble an individual you know—current or past. Read these problem statements more carefully and annotate them with comments or questions.
>
> **Fieldwork**
> Identify an individual who is underperforming and is being evaluated (should be someone who is marginally effective or below). Collect multiple sources of data including but not limited to observation. Bring all documentation to the next session. Redact any names to maintain confidentiality.

Session 5: Documenting and Communicating Problems (60 minutes total)

Note: All participants are expected to present a case even if they make the questionable claim that they "do not have any ineffective performers." You may get some pushback on the level of detail illustrated in the examples. Acknowledge that their writing may not always be as detailed but that both **evidence** and **impact** need to be represented.

Start-up (10 minutes)
Whip around: What strikes you as important about the concepts of Claims, Evidence, Impact, and Judgment (CEIJ) as illustrated in the annotated Example 6D.1? How do these concepts reflect past practice and in what ways might they stretch your practice?

Session Content (45 minutes)
Activity: Problem presentation
Set up small groups of 3-4. Each participant has 10 minutes to present his/her case and material to the group. Listeners discuss and agree on...
* What the major presenting problems are and which seem to hold the greatest potential for a high-leverage intervention
* Whether the current evidence is sufficient to support the problem description/analysis and justify a low rating—and if not, what else needs to be collected

Note: There will be a temptation to discuss recommendations. Be firm and postpone that topic until next session.

Reflection and next steps
Each member has a minute to summarize what s/he has learned and what steps s/he will take to upgrade the problem definition.

Commitment for Prep (5 minutes)

> **Assignment to prepare for Session 6**
> Read Chapter 7D, Developing Accountable Recommendations, pp. 159-169.
>
> *Focus Questions*
> * How would you assess the quality of the recommendations that you have made in the past in light of what is presented in this chapter?
> * Do any of the cases listed on p. 161 align with your case? Do a more detailed examination of those cases.
>
> **Fieldwork**
> Bring in any writing that includes recommendations. Try to select writing that addresses underperformance.

Session 6: Crafting Accountable Recommendations (60-120 minutes total)
Note: This will likely require two sessions.

Start-up (10 minutes)
Full-group discussion/reflection
* How do the recommendations cited in the chapter compare with your past recommendations? What are the implications for your work?
* Which of the examples did you find most helpful?

Session Content (45 minutes)
In small groups (3-4 members) (40 minutes)
Participants have 10 minutes each to present their cases and material. Colleagues focus on evaluating the quality of the problem description and accompanying recommendations using Figure 7D.3: Criteria for Effective Recommendations. Participants first self-assess; then group members give feedback and suggestions as requested.

Reflection and next steps (5 minutes)
Individually, write about what revisons you should make to your description and recommendations (or what changes you would make next time if the report has already been given to the teacher).